

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CU-04 CEA-01
STR-07 /123 W

-----051930 271649Z /45

P R 271000Z FEB 78
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7318
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, EINV, SF, US
SUBJ: REACTION TO AFL-CIO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON SOUTH
AFRICA

REF: STATE 048853

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. FOLLOWING FRONT PAGE HEADLINE ARTICLE APPEARED IN FEBRUARY 27
EDITION RAND DAILY MAIL: QUOTE: CUT SA TIES, SAYS TOP US UNIONIST:
AMERICA'S TOP TRADE UNIONIST, MR. GEORGE MEANY HAS THROWN HIS
WEIGHT BEHIND GROWING PRESSURES ON THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO
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SEVER DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA.
MR. MEANY, UNTIL NOW RELUCTANT TO SUPPORT A SPECIFIC PROGRAM OF
ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID, MADE HIS CALL AT THE WEEKEND AFTER A
SPEECH TO AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR (AFL) CONVENTION BY
THE BANNED AND SELF-EXILED SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPER EDITOR, MR.
DONALD WOODS.

THE CONSERVATIVE PRESIDENT OF THE POWERFUL AFL GAVE NOTICE THAT HIS ORGANIZATION WILL CALL ON THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO:

- HALT ALL EXPORT-IMPORT BANK INSURANCE, CREDITS AND LOAN GUARANTEES THAT PROMOTE THE FLOW OF CAPITAL AND TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA.
- START SEVERING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND PRETORIA.
- HALT ALL PARTICIPATION IN "SOCIAL, CULTURAL, ATHLETIC AND OTHER ACTIVITIES" WITH S.A.
- SUPPORT UNITED NATIONS "DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS" AGAINST S.A.

BUT THE AGEING TRADE UNIONIST WHO HAS RULED AMERICAN LABOR WITH AN IRON FIST FOR MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY, APPEARS TO HAVE RESISTED A YEAR-LONG INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU) LOBBY TO ENLIST HIS SUPPORT FOR A WORLD-WIDE BOYCOTT AGAINST HANDLING OF S.A. GOODS.

CONDEMNING APARTHEID AND CALLING ON THE US TO TAKE THE LEAD IN HELPING TO END THE "VICIOUS POLICY," HE MADE NO MENTION OF THE CURRENT ICFTU CAMPAIGN TO ENFORCE A BOYCOTT.

"THE OPPRESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA MUST BE VIEWED WITH PARTICULAR ALARM SINCE IT IS COMMITTED UNDER THE GUISE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY," MR. MEANY SAID.

HE AND MR. WOODS ALSO HELD A PRIVATE MEETING. LABOR OFFICIALS SAID THEY STRUCK UP A WARM FRIENDSHIP.

LAST NIGHT THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR. PIK BOTHA, DECLINED TO COMMENT ON MR. MEANY'S STAND.

BUT THE MINISTER OF LABOR, MR. S.P. BOTHA, INDICATED THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT WAS ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH DIRECT LINKS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

"WE ARE AIMING AT A DIRECT SAY ON THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION FRONT SO THAT MISCONCEPTIONS CAN BE CLEARED OUT OF THE WAY," MR. BOTHA SAID. "I BELIEVE THIS EFFORT WILL BE WORTH WHILE. STEPS TAKEN RECENTLY HAVE ALREADY BORNE FRUIT."

DECLINING TO ELABORATE ON THE STEPS, MR. BOTHA SAID HE HAD BEEN AWARE THAT THE AFL MET IN LOSANGELES LAST WEEK TO CONSIDER STEPS AGAINST S.A. AND SUPPORT ICFTU MOVES AGAINST THE REPUBLIC.

OTHER SOURCES CONNECTED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPTS TO STAVE OFF INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ACTION, INDICATED LAST NIGHT MR. MEANY HAD MERELY BACKED EXISTING STEPS THAT WERE ALREADY BEING TAKEN AGAINST THE COUNTRY IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER.

RELIEVED THAT MR. MEANY HAD AVOIDED SUPPORT OF A BOYCOTT AGAINST THE HANDLING OF S.A. GOODS, THE SOURCES WARNED THE AMERICAN LABOR LEADER'S STAND WOULD PROBABLY ENCOURAGE THE US CONGRESS TO TAKE A HARDER LINE AGAINST APARTHEID.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA, MR. ARTHUR GROBBELAAR, SAID LAST NIGHT HE HAD SENT A CABLE TO MR. MEANY SEVERAL WEEKS AGO REPEATING TUCSA'S OPPOSITION TO SANCTIONS.

BUT HE WARNED THAT ALTHOUGH AN ICFTU ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE A WEEK-

LONG BOYCOTT LAST YEAR HAD FAILED, A SIMILAR BOYCOTT COULD BE
"ON THE CARDS" THIS YEAR. END QUOTE. END UNCLASSIFIED

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2. COMMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESSURE BY THE INTERNATIONAL
TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, AS WELL AS FOREIGN INVESTORS, IS VERY GREAT.
WITHOUT SUCH PRESSURES, IT IS DOUBTFUL THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERN-
MENT WOULD HOLD OUT AS MUCH PROMISE OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR
BLACK WORKERS. AMENDMENTS TO THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION ACT, TO
INCLUDE BLACK WORKERS WITHIN THE DEFINITION OF "EMPLOYEE" AND
THEREBY GIVE THEM ACCESS TO REGISTERED TRADE UNIONISM AND THE
CONCILIATION MACHINERY, HAD BEEN PROMISED FOR AS EARLY AS NEXT
MONTH. MINISTER OF LABOR BOTHA REPORTEDLY SAID OVER THE WEEKEND,
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HOWEVER, THAT THE REPORT OF THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION ON LABOR
REFORM IS NOW NOT EXPECTED UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR AND NO MAJOR
LABOR LEGISLATION WILL BE TABLED DURING THE PRESENT SESSION OF
PARLIAMENT. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, LABOR UNIONS, RESOLUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978JOHANN00489
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780089-1015
Format: TEL
From: JOHANNESBURG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780210/aaaaahsk.tel
Line Count: 141
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 67b8cdcc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 48853
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3425200
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO AFL-CIO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON SOUTH AFRICA
TAGS: ELAB, EINV, SOPN, SF, US, AFL-CIO, (BOTH, SP)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/67b8cdcc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014